

Being a Faithful Bishop

The Reverend J. Sierra Reyes preached this sermon via video for the livestreamed ordination and consecration of Frank Sullivan Logue as the 11th Bishop of Georgia. The Rev. Reyes is Rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Denver, CO.



It is an absolute joy to preach on this occasion.

Before we engage with today's text and the call before us in Frank Logue as the 11th Bishop of Georgia, I ask for a point of personal privilege.

I want to acknowledge two people whose faithful witness has brought us to this moment in time.

First, I want to offer gratitude to the 9th Bishop of Georgia, Henry Louttit, and his wife Jan. Bishop Louttit not only had a vision for an Episcopal church in Kingsland, GA, but provided loving oversight and pastoral care to the church's founding priest, Frank Logue. Church planting is difficult work. And yet Frank and the people of King of Peace benefited from Bishop Louttit's leadership. We are here today reaping the fruits of your service among us, Bishop Louttit. As your father did before as Bishop, you have mentored an entire generation of clergy. Thank you.

Next, I want to offer gratitude for the 10th Bishop of Georgia Scott Benhase and his wife, Kelly. On behalf of the Church in Georgia, thank you for your faithfulness as our Bishop over the past decade. You, also, have mentored a generation of clergy, and I am grateful to be among the clergy ordained by your hands. Thank you for equipping us with the tools of congregational leadership and development. Thank you for being a model of courage leadership. And at every turn, teaching us the importance and the necessity of grace. Thank you.

Georgia is a good strong, and healthy Diocese because of these two Bishops and their predecessors and because of you, the people of God in the Diocese of Georgia. To God be the glory. Thank you.

And now to Bishop-elect Frank Sullivan Logue.

Let's start by stating the obvious. This is not how I imagined your ordination as Bishop. It is beautiful to see how many people are participating in today's liturgy from every corner of our church. But I believe we were all supposed to be physically together to witness this historic day.

The church would have descended upon Savannah in droves.

This entire ordination weekend would have been filled of amazing people gathered around tables of hospitality and good Southern food.

I don't live in the South anymore, so I was so eager about the food – when I heard Chef John Benhase was cooking, I wanted to look up what was the allowed size of Tupperware one could take upon an airplane, because oh, I was bringing a plate back to Colorado.

The food would have been that good.

But that is not how today unfolded. Instead, we huddled over our computer screens and phones to be a witness to God's work in the church—and the calling forth of Frank Logue as the newest Bishop in Christendom.

But I'm left with a lingering question.

I am curious with myself about the emotion that I'm feeling on this day.

And it hit me.

I am feeling **confident sadness**. A double consciousness of grief and the healing power of God's love. Sadness when people or circumstances disappoint us and hope in a God that restores, redeems, and renews. Confident sadness. And this emotion is familiar.

My childhood summers are marked with the feelings felt leaving Honey Creek. The sadness at the loss of security, radical acceptance. And not knowing when it would be the next time I'll see those people circled around the bell tower, sing these songs of joy.

But the sadness was always accompanied by a sense of hope and anticipatory joy for when I would return to the Creek.

And confident sadness is where we find the disciples in our Gospel text from the final chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

Before you dive into any passage from Luke, you have to remember two things: First, Jesus was poor. Luke more than any other Gospel makes a point of unfolding the origin story of Jesus – that he was born in a manger and that his parents couldn't afford the suggested animal sacrifice – and qualified for the temple's equivalent for temporary assistance for needy families.

And the second thing you need to know about the Lucan Jesus is that his message from day one is that God loves all people – even those who are deemed inferior because of the status quo.

In Luke, we have an emphasis of Jesus' ministry being to those who are oppressed, excluded, living on thin ice – those who are on the margins of society.



Luke describes a God in Jesus Christ that is found in the very places and among the very people who were deemed outside of God's love and favor. It is as though Luke is saying, "Imagine the farthest place you would expect to find holiness or beauty or power, and there is where Jesus is to be found."

My favorite verse in all of scripture – is verse 41 found in our Gospel – while in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, Jesus said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

That's my Jesus. Keeping the main thing the main thing. Focusing the disciples. The disciples were getting all caught up in their joy and disbelief that they needed to be reminded of hospitality, generosity and service.

We can easily get caught up in the sadness of this time, but Jesus needs us to focus on the main thing.

And this is where our Bishop comes in because the role of Bishop is that focusing leadership. In ensuring that we as the church, keep the main thing the main thing.

And the main thing is love. Love not just a feeling – but love in action. An action that gives us the strength and courage to continue the apostle's teaching and fellowship, to preserve in resisting evil and asking for repentance when we turn away from God, to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. To seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself. To strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.

It could be somewhat intimidating preaching the ordination sermon of someone notorious for their ability to preach on such occasions. Frank served as the preacher for my ordination to the diaconate and priesthood, and as the preacher of my marriage. Preaching is a gift God has given Frank. And there is a generation of clergy who have had Frank preach at their ordinations, including his incoming Canon to the Ordinary.

And what Frank reminds us at every sermon is what I will remind him. Frank, this is not about you.

We are not here because of your charisma and ability to connect with people from various walks of life. Today is not about you. This day is about a world in desperate need of hearing the Good News, the life-saving Gospel – the redemptive power of God found in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

All that we do and say and pray and sing during this service and beyond as the Church – This is not about Frank, or about us, but what God is doing.

And that is why my sadness is grounded in the confidence of God.

Bishop-Elect Frank—here is my prayer.

I pray that you receive the power of the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel boldly. Using words when necessary. I pray that the same grace you preach for others, you receive for yourself. That you come to know that your worth and value to God is not tied to your position in the church. I pray that you enjoy this calling. Take pleasure in this next chapter and delight in God's presence. And I pray for the same delight for Victoria and Griffin to experience.

The funny thing Frank is if all these prayers are answered, I don't know if you'll be a good Bishop. Whatever that means. So, my prayer isn't that you are a good Bishop. But that you'll be a faithful bishop.

And a being a faithful Bishop is the calling the people of God in South Georgia have affirmed in you. Thank you for saying yes.

Amen.

